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LETTER DATED 12 DECEMBER 1997 FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to refer to the situation in the Great Lakes region and Central Africa, and to the need to adjust the United Nations political presence in that region to the new environment brought about by the momentous changes that have taken place there since the beginning of the year.

As you know, the United Nations contribution to the regional mediation concerning Burundi and to the international peace initiatives which accompanied the changes of regime in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of the Congo has been largely carried out by Mr. Mohammed Sahnoun, in his capacity as Joint United Nations/Organization of African Unity Special Representative for the Great Lakes Region of Africa. His mandate was outlined in my letter of 22 January 1997 to your predecessor (S/1997/73) and endorsed by the members of the Security Council (S/1997/74).

I wish now to seek the Council's concurrence with a new mandate for Mr. Sahnoun in Africa, as well as for a new political and humanitarian presence for the United Nations in the Great Lakes region, in the person of my former Special Envoy for Sierra Leone, Mr. Berhanu Dinka.

As my Special Envoy in Africa, Mr. Sahnoun will continue to follow closely developments in Central Africa, including the Great Lakes region. He will also lend his support to existing peacemaking and peace-building initiatives there, and give special attention to Burundi. In addition, he will be available for preventive and other missions that I may ask him to undertake in other regions of Africa as needed. Mr. Sahnoun will operate on an as and when employed basis. I estimate the cost of his mission as my Special Envoy in Africa at US$ 890,000 for the biennium 1998-1999.

Mr. Sahnoun could not have carried out his difficult assignments over the last 11 months without the generosity of those Governments who have made funds available for his mission through the Special Fund set up in support of his efforts. To those Governments, I wish to express here my deep gratitude.

As for Mr. Dinka, he will serve as my Representative and Regional Humanitarian Adviser for the Great Lakes Region.

In his capacity as my Representative, Mr. Dinka will represent me in meetings held in the region, monitor developments and their implications for peace and regional security, and seek to contribute to regional efforts in the prevention or peaceful settlement of conflicts. With specific regard to Burundi, he will oversee the political activities of the United Nations in that country, and support ongoing political initiatives for Burundi both inside and outside the country. In carrying out the above functions, Mr. Dinka will consult my Special Envoy in Africa as required.

In his capacity as Regional Humanitarian Adviser, Mr. Dinka will represent the Emergency Relief Coordinator in the Great Lakes region, facilitate the coordination of humanitarian assistance, support the Resident Coordinators, Humanitarian Coordinators and agency heads, and coordinate resource mobilization efforts at the regional level.

He will set up an office in Nairobi with a complement of three Professionals, two internationally recruited General Service staff, one Security Officer, and three locally recruited staff. The total estimated cost of the Office of the Representative of the Secretary-General and Regional Humanitarian Adviser for the Great Lakes Region is approximately US$ 3 million for the biennium 1998-1999.

(Signed) Kofi A. ANNAN